

St Joseph the Worker Catholic Primary School

Bewley Drive, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L32 9PF

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make consistently good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Key Stage 1.
- There has been recent improvement in standards in Key Stage 2. Pupils' progress in literacy is generally effective. In mathematics, progress has improved considerably and, in the main, it is now strong.
- From their start in the Nursery class to the end of Year 6, the overall progress of boys and girls is good.
- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. No inadequate teaching was seen.
- Pupils enjoy school and value the support that staff provide. On occasion, they work with impressive diligence and enthusiasm in lessons. Staff and pupils vigorously uphold the school's Christian precepts and strive to maintain its caring ethos.
- The school is well led. Leaders ensure that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress. There has been recent sharp improvement in standards in mathematics and in attendance. Teachers' work is firmly managed.
- Resolute governance has made a strong contribution to improvement. The school ensures that the pupil premium and other funding are spent to good effect. The school is well supported by the local authority.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Recent improvement in older pupils' progress in mathematics requires consolidation.
- Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work is sometimes not as good as it should be.
- Teachers should sometimes do more to identify the slips that pupils make in what they say and what they write. More could be done to ensure that pupils act on such advice when it is given.
- Coordinators of literacy and numeracy do not have enough opportunities to see lessons and evaluate data on pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, and teaching was seen in all classrooms. In addition, brief visits were made to several classrooms and an inspector listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. The inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders and a group of pupils.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included pupils' work in the current year, data on pupils' achievements in national assessments, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. Records on provision for those pupils who need additional support, safeguarding procedures, behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be recorded. However, an inspector had a meeting with a parent and a survey of parents' views that had been conducted by the school was considered. There were 25 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Jim Bennetts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is high and nearly twice the national proportion. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils whose learning needs are supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is a more than double the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is nursery provision in the morning and in the afternoon. There are eight classes, one for each year group. Pupils in Year 6 are taught as an upper and a lower-ability group in separate classrooms for literacy and numeracy.
- The school has a before-school care club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by:
 - ensuring that the progress of all pupils in mathematics is always as strong as possible
 - providing further opportunities for teachers to refine their skills in teaching and raising achievement in mathematics.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - sharpening attention to pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - ensuring that, in lessons and written work, slips that pupils make are identified as thoroughly as possible
 - ensuring that there is a clear expectation for pupils to demonstrate improvement on the points identified by marking.
- Improve leadership and management by providing more opportunities for the coordinators of literacy and numeracy to engage in classroom observation and evaluation of data, so that they have a clearer perception of the effectiveness of pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Nursery class with skills generally much weaker than are usually found at that age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, and that is sustained as they move through Years 1 and 2. They quickly develop effective learning habits. Even at the very end of the day, children in the Reception class were attentive and keen to express appreciation of one another's impressive efforts with artwork. Data show good progress from Nursery to Year 2 over many years. Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally only a little below those found nationally.
- In 2011 and 2012, Year 6 pupils reached standards in English that were a little lower than those found nationally. A substantial proportion of pupils in those years had disabilities or special educational needs and some had joined the school only recently. However, results were much weaker in mathematics than in English. Vigorous action by senior staff and improvement in teaching has ensured that pupils are now generally making good headway with mathematics. From their start in the Nursery class to the end of Year 6, the overall progress of boys and girls is good. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds do well.
- Pupils' reading is well developed. Younger pupils respond well to sessions that focus on the links between letters and the sounds they make. In Years 2 and Year 6, pupils are confident in sounding out new words; they can give a good account of what they have picked up from what they have read. Older pupils show an appreciation of writing in different styles and for different purposes. Standards in reading are close to those found nationally.
- While some pupils, generally the more able, have good handwriting for their age, many older pupils' writing is not joined and the presentation of work often leaves scope for improvement.
- Pupils who find it difficult to learn (disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs) make good progress from their starting points. Some have very significant learning difficulties. They are well supported by staff with a good understanding of their needs and effective skills to help those who find it hard to learn.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for support from pupil premium funding do well. Data show that in some years they have actually done better than others. In Year 6 national tests in recent years, the proportion of such pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 4 in English and mathematics has sometimes been greater than for other pupils; they made better progress from their starting points. In general, they make better headway than similar pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- In a large proportion of lessons seen, teaching was good. Occasionally, teaching was outstanding. No inadequate teaching was seen.
- Teachers generally know their pupils well and plan lessons that are pitched at the right level and capture pupils' interest. Teachers liaise well with teaching assistants so that all pupils have good support and good opportunities for learning.
- Occasionally, teachers are not as precise as they might be in the use of terminology, nor do they always correct pupils' casual use of language. In a very few lessons, activities could have been planned more effectively to make the necessary points, for instance by demonstrating practical effects more clearly.
- The school is on the point of introducing a handwriting scheme to improve the consistency and quality of handwriting across the age range. Much of pupils' work is well presented and they take a pride in it, but some could be neater.
- In an excellent mathematics lesson, tasks were perfectly matched to pupils' capabilities, they were eager to learn and those of all abilities did well. There has been improvement in the teaching of mathematics, but it is not yet consistently of the highest quality.
- Strategies to enable pupils, where necessary, to catch up on things they have not mastered, and

to assist weaker pupils are effective. Staff know well how to help those on the register of special educational needs and skilful support enables them to learn successfully.

- The school tracks pupils' progress by effective methods, and progress across the school in mathematics is now at least as good as in reading and writing. Test papers show that there is generally effective learning across the full range of mathematics topics that are compatible with pupils' abilities. However, close analysis of the oldest pupils' work reveals a few particular learning points, different ones for different pupils, which are not yet fully secure.
- Teachers generally mark pupils' written work well, congratulating them on strengths and pointing out how improvements might be made. However, the thoroughness of marking is variable. For instance, more could be done to prompt some pupils to attend to incorrect spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where advice on such points has been given, there are rarely systematic checks on whether the advice has been taken.
- The work of learning mentors and other support staff contributes well to the learning of those pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. They say that it is a happy place, where all pupils get on well together. They greatly appreciate all that staff do for them and they feel safe at school. Most staff strongly agree that behaviour is of high quality.
- Pupils know that friends can sometimes have disagreements, and they understand the forms that bullying can take. They say that bullying is not a feature of life at this school and are confident that staff would sort out any unpleasantness. The school's log book shows that difficulties between pupils are rare, and dealt with appropriately.
- In lessons, pupils are unfailingly conscientious. They cooperate well with each other, working well in pairs and groups. They are keen to please their teachers. In some lessons seen, behaviour and attitudes were outstanding; pupils were eager to learn and worked with a palpable spirit of urgency. In other lessons, pupils showed less initiative but responded well to encouragement from staff.
- As they move about the school and play outside, pupils are considerate of one another and well mannered.
- Pupils thrive in the positive atmosphere of the school. They are keen to do their bit in contributing to the compassionate Christian ethos that has been built up over many years by the careful stewardship of staff and governors.
- Pupils are pleased about the chance to have their say on developments. They are delighted with the secure bicycle cage that has resulted from school council deliberation and say that their views are always taken seriously.
- Older pupils are articulate and have a mature understanding of the world in which they live. They are sensible about possible hazards, they feel confident about going about in their neighbourhood, more cautious about further afield in the city.
- Attendance was low in the past. Vigorous work by staff has resulted in marked improvement, which has been maintained over the last two years. Attendance improved to at least average for pupil premium pupils and others in 2012. Good attendance has continued.
- The breakfast club provides a wholesome start to the day for those who come to school early.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff morale is high and leaders are well supported by staff at all levels. Parents are very appreciative of the school. Over the years, a highly positive ethos has been built. Staff and pupils work earnestly to make the school a happy place where all can find success. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are cherished and do well.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher keep careful track of all pupils' progress and ensure that there is help for any who might be struggling. The work that staff do is closely managed. Lesson observations by senior staff are frequent and perceptive, providing clear pointers for improvement. The work of teaching assistants is monitored well. Training opportunities are provided where appropriate; recently this has been particularly with mathematics. Appraisal of staff and its link with pay progression is securely based.
- Leaders for literacy and numeracy have a sound overview of pupils' progress in their subjects. However, they have insufficient opportunity to observe lessons and evaluate data in order to maximise their impact on the improvement of learning.
- There is a rich variety of learning opportunities in lessons and additional activities. Pupils were seen enjoying the art club and film club. The chance to use computers after school is appreciated. Older pupils show great enthusiasm, and skill, with after-school football. Older pupils found the residential visit to Wales enormous fun.
- Pupils' personal development is carefully fostered. There are strong links with the parish. Worship is an important element in school life and pupils uphold the school's mission to be a loving Christian family. There are opportunities to appreciate the perspectives of other faiths and cultures, for instance through links with Spain and Namibia, as well as with a Catholic school in Devon.
- The school has set clear priorities for improvement. It continues to be well supported by the local authority and links with other schools through local collaborative arrangements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have given wise counsel and unstinting support to the school. They have ensured that priority has been given to rectifying slippage in pupils' attendance and progress in mathematics. They hold senior staff to account with the leadership of teaching and the management of staff and their pay progression. There are proper procedures for setting the headteacher's objectives. Safeguarding checks and child protection practice meet all requirements. Governors keep a careful check on how, and how effectively, pupil premium funding is spent. The governing body has a range of helpful professional experience and expertise; governors have access to appropriate training. The school is well governed.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131836
Local authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	411895

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony McGuinness
Headteacher	Christine Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2009
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